Early Modern Europe, 1500-1815

Kresge 321 • Winter 2018 • HIS 70A • MW, 5:20-6:55 pm

Instructor: Prof. Benjamin Breen (bebreen@ucsc.edu)

Classroom: Kresge 279

Office hours: Thursday, 12-1, or by appointment (Stevenson 279)

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What is this course about?

In a haunting painting from the 1650s known as La Vida es Sueño (Life is a Dream), a Spanish artist named Antonio de Pereda depicted a young man who has fallen asleep amid a host of valuable objects: guns, globes, printed books, playing cards, violins, classical music scores. All of these things were invented or popularized during the period that this class studies.

The angel holds a cryptic Latin banner that, loosely translated, says
something like “Forever it stings, yet quickly it dies.” The reference is to the man’s never-ending thirst for new objects, new possessions—and to his inevitable death, when all of his earthly belongings will cease to matter. The history of Europe in what historians call the “early modern era”—the period running from Columbus’s first voyage to the Americas in 1492 up to the American and French Revolutions and the age of industrialization and steam power—is one of the most fascinating stories ever told. The sleeping knight was living through a period of transformation that was unprecedented in human history. Moons and cells were being discovered by new tools called “telescopes” and “microscopes.” Diseases like syphilis and smallpox were causing unprecedented destruction. The slave trade was nearing its hideous height. Warfare was being transformed by rapid innovation in the production of firearms. New religions were being born—and destroyed. The climate was lurching toward a “Little Ice Age” that many early modern people believed was the apocalypse.

This world of technological innovation, warfare, climate change and materialism should seem familiar to you. Although our version of the young man’s dream might contain cell phones rather than swords, our society is his society, too. We, the people of the twenty-first century, are the inheritors of changes that began in early modern Europe. If we want to understand our world, and our common future, we have to understand this dream as well. This class will help you do so.

**What do I hope you learn?**

The core goal of this course is to teach you how to think and write in a compelling way. The second objective is to provide you with a solid understanding of the history of Europe and the European empires. This is a course that is weighted heavily toward rewarding class participation and original research for the final paper. You will need to think critically and creatively rather than simply memorize facts.

**What are the assignments?**

There will be four assignments over the course of the semester, listed here in chronological order:

1) **Old Bailey crimes analysis.** Familiarize yourself with the Old Bailey website ([https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Crimes.jsp](https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Crimes.jsp)) and choose a crime that you find interesting. Write a two-page, double spaced analysis of the criminal record describing both what it consists of and what it seems to leave out. **Due on class 6.**
2) **Midterm.** A take-home test featuring ID questions and a single short essay question based on primary sources included in *Early Modern Europe, 1450-1815.*

3) **Alternate history project.** Imagine an alternate fate for one of the cities or states that we have looked at so far. Pinpoint one event that could have gone differently—an altered line of succession, winning or losing a battle, an epidemic disease following a different path, etc.—and then collectively write a 3-4 page political and social history of your alternate-universe country. Due on **Monday, February 26.**

4) **Two map quizzes** (class 4 and class 17).

5) **Final.** An 8 to 10 page final paper on a topic to be announced after the midterm.

There may also be pop quizzes on the course reading at random points.

**What's the grading policy?**

In-class participation (includes map and pop quizzes): 20%
Alternate history project: 15%
Old Bailey Crime: 15%
Midterm: 20%
Final: 30%

Students are expected to spend 15 hours per week on the course, with 4.25 hours spent in class, approximately 8 hours for reading (including writing reading responses) and the remainder spent on preparation for the midterm and final paper.

**What happens if you cheat?**

More than most, history is a discipline built on the work of others. But doing good history - and being an ethical student and scholar - depends upon properly attributing ideas. Claiming other people's words and ideas as your own without crediting them is plagiarism. Any student who plagiarizes will likely receive an F in this course in addition to the punishments detailed here, which can include dismissal https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_misconduct

**Disability-related accommodations**

If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me within the **first week of the quarter.** Contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu for more information.
REQUIRED TEXTS
(available at the campus bookstore)

• Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, Early Modern Europe, 1450–1789 (Cambridge History of Europe) 2nd Edition.

• Benvenuto Cellini, The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini (Penguin edition)

MONDAY, JANUARY 8
Class 1: Introduction
• No advance reading.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10
Class 2: What is ‘early modernity’ and why should you care?
• Reading due by beginning of class: Early Modern Europe, intro and ch. 1.

MONDAY, JANUARY 15
Class 3: MLK DAY – NO CLASS MEETING
• Reading due by beginning of class: Early Modern Europe, ch. 2.
  + Braudel, “Daily Bread” on Canvas.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17
Class 4: Introduction to historical research
• No reading, but an assignment: find a compelling and/or unusual historical primary source in your everyday life (such as the memories of a friend or relative, a personal artifact, or a manuscript) and be prepared to discuss it in class. Also begin working on Old Bailey homework.

MONDAY, JANUARY 22
Class 5: Was there a Renaissance?
• Reading due by beginning of class: Early Modern Europe, ch. 4
  + first 22 pages of Cellini, Autobiography.
**In class: Map Quiz #1: Europe in 1490**

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24**

**Class 6: Soldiers, sculptors, and states**

- Reading due by beginning of class: continue with Cellini (pg. 22 to 65)

  - 🏰 HOMEWORK DUE. On Canvas *before* class, submit your 2-page analysis of an Old Bailey crime of your choosing. Be prepared to discuss your chosen crime in class.

**MONDAY, JANUARY 29**

**Class 7: The Reformation and Counter-Reformation**

- Reading due by beginning of class: *Early Modern Europe*, ch. 5
- Watch *The Seventh Seal* (1957), a film by Ingmar Bergman.

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31**

**Class 8: Days in the life of a peasant and a noble**

- Reading due by beginning of class: Cellini, 70-120.
- Also read (and more importantly study the images within) “A Renaissance Merchant’s Life in Clothing”:

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5**

**Class 9: Witches and wizards**

- Reading due by beginning of class: King James, “Counterblaste to Tobacco”:
  [https://www.laits.utexas.edu/poltheory/james/blaste/blaste.html](https://www.laits.utexas.edu/poltheory/james/blaste/blaste.html)
- *Malleus Maleficarum* [“The Hammer of Witches”], Part 1, Question 5:
- “Defining the Demonic”:
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Class 10: What Did Early Modern Food Taste Like?

• Reading due by beginning of class: select and read three articles of your choice from the Recipes Project: http://recipes.hypotheses.org.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12

Class 11: MIDTERM

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Class 12: Was Benvenuto Cellini Crazy?

• Reading due by beginning of class: Cellini, 120-150.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Class 13: The Rise of Cities – PRESIDENTS DAY – NO CLASS

• Reading due by beginning of class: Early Modern Europe, ch. 6.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Class 14: Europe and the World

• Reading due by beginning of class: Early Modern Europe, ch. 7.


MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Class 15: Was There a Scientific Revolution?

• Reading due by beginning of class: Galileo, Cavendish and Pepys sources on Canvas.

• 🗓️ HOMEWORK DUE: submit Alternate History project at beginning of class.
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Class 16: The Enlightenment

• Reading due by beginning of class: *Early Modern Europe*, ch. 9.
  + The Haitian Declaration of Independence (1804):
    [https://today.duke.edu/showcase/haitideclaration/declarationstext.html](https://today.duke.edu/showcase/haitideclaration/declarationstext.html)

MONDAY, MARCH 5

Class 17: Napoleon

• Reading due by beginning of class: David Bell's Napoleon biography, available on Canvas.

In class: Map Quiz #2

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7

Class 18: Age of Empires and Machines

• Reading due by beginning of class: *Early Modern Europe*, ch. 12.

MONDAY, MARCH 12

Class 19: The Nineteenth Century and Beyond

• No reading, work on final papers.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14

Class 20: NO CLASS – FINAL PAPERS DUE FRIDAY MARCH 16 at 5:00 PM

“Certes, c’est un subject merveilleusement vain, divers, et ondoyant, que l’homme. Il est malaisé d’y fonder jugement constant et uniforme.”

“A human being is a subject that is marvelously vain, complex, and shifting.”
It is difficult to found any certain & reliable judgement on them.”
—Michel de Montaigne, 1580